

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning & Skills & Community
Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 18 November 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community &
Resources

PORTFOLIO: Economic Development

SUBJECT: Policy Update

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Board of recent national policy announcements relevant to the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy Performance Board.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

2.1 **That the report is noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 A number of policy, legislation, consultation and guidance documents, are issued by government departments and agencies that have varying degrees of relevance to issues on the employment, learning and skills agenda and related topics.

3.2 The information provided is not intended to be in-depth but provides a brief summary of key announcements along with observations of local relevance, where appropriate. The Board can then consider whether to initiate more detailed scrutiny and/or report to a future meeting.

3.3 The report should be considered alongside the 'key developments' and 'emerging issues' that are set out in the Quarterly Performance Report.

4.0 NATIONAL POLITICS AND ISSUES

4.1 Changes in the Department for Education (DfE)

Gavin Williamson was appointed as the Secretary of State for Education, replacing Damian Hinds.

Mr Williamson attended a sixth form college to complete his A Levels so it is felt by college professionals that he has a good understanding of the role of colleges. He has announced that he will personally take on responsibility for the apprenticeships and skills brief. A DfE spokesperson

has said “FE and skills will be a priority for this government and the Education Secretary taking the lead for this vital work is a reflection of that commitment.”

An independent commission on the ‘College of the Future’ has been launched and chaired by Sir Ian Diamond to look at what the country (4 nations) needs from colleges from 2030. There will be a set of clear recommendations for each nation published in Spring 2020.

Lord Agnew has been given responsibility as the Minister for the FE sector including quality and improvement.

4.2 **FE and Skills funding**

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, has announced funding of £400m for students aged 16-18 in FE and sixth form colleges, school sixth forms and independent training providers (ITPs).

This will come into effect from August 2020. A further £100m has been allocated to help cover increases in pension costs in 2020/2021. There has been an increase in the funding colleges receive for full time students aged 16-18.

4.3 **Ofsted – Education Inspection Framework (EIF)**

The new EIF was launched in September 2019. This is the framework that colleges including our Adult Education Service will be inspected on. There are two linked themes that run all the way through the framework: the substance of education and integrity. Ofsted say “*We are proposing an evolutionary shift that rebalances inspection to look rather more closely at the substance of education: what is taught and how it is taught, with test and exam outcomes looked at in that context, not in isolation.*”

4.4 **Curriculum Reforms**

T Levels, Applied Generals, Standards There will be changes next year that mean the College will have to change some vocational qualifications with the introduction of more externally assessed units.

4.5 **LCR Apprenticeship Hub**

SIF funding to create a new Skills & Apprenticeship Hub has been secured by the Combined Authority. The funding will enable the existing LCR Apprenticeship Hub Team based at Halton Borough Council and the Skills for Growth Team (based at the Combined Authority) to come together more strategically with other areas of work within the Combined Authority around careers and sectors. The new Skills & Apprenticeship Hub will have 5 main functions:

- Employer engagement and brokerage on identifying skills needs,

developing and implementing training plans, promoting apprenticeships as a means to address those skills gaps, liaising with providers to arrange delivery and facilitating transfers of apprentice levy;

- Back office record processing for skills investments, management of a training fund, ensuring alignment with local and national policy and with devolved Adult Education Budget and upload onto national skills databases;
- Promotion of apprenticeships to schools, young people, parents and broader communities, including facilitating the Apprentice Ambassador Network, supporting Be More and providing additional capacity on apprenticeship policy;
- Additional skills support for specific sectors and commissioning additional activity to support the narrowing of gaps around females, BAME and those with disabilities; and
- Overall management and compliance with SIF and ESF funding requirements.

A hybrid model for the new Hub has been signed off by the Combined Authority, which will see Halton Council continuing to manage the Apprenticeship Hub, the new Growth Company at the LEP – Growth Platform – managing the Skills for Growth service and the Combined Authority overseeing the work around careers and sectors – and having overall management of the project. The new Skills & Apprenticeship Hub started on 1st November 2019.

An application for additional funds through ESF has also been submitted and, if successful, will see the numbers of Apprenticeship Hub and Skills for Growth Brokers increase.

So far, the Combined Authority's Skills for Growth team have supported a number of businesses in transferring unspent levy to smaller businesses. This has enabled 100 new apprenticeship opportunities to be secured. This work will continue as part of the new Skills & Apprenticeship Hub. Further details are included elsewhere on the agenda.

4.6 **Brexit Council & Brexit Executive Team**

A Liverpool City Region Brexit Council, which meets monthly, was established earlier in the year to consider the challenges that leaving the EU could present to the City Region, the potential opportunities and to determine an appropriate response. The Council comprises a cross section of leaders from the public and private sector including Merseyside Police, NHS, Universities, Colleges, CBI, FSB, Chambers of Commerce and the Combined Authority.

A small Brexit Executive Team has been established to consider the challenges and opportunities faced by businesses and residents in the

City Region as a result of exiting the EU. The Team has been tasked with compiling the evidence base and preparing proposals to address the particular challenges and opportunities facing the City Region in relation to:

- business resilience and;
- keeping people in employment and training as the economy transitions to exiting the EU.

The Team is drawn from executives from across the 6 City Region Local Authorities, Growth Hubs, LEP and the CA, particularly those involved in business support, employment, skills and economic policy. The Team has now had 2 meetings and is beginning to map out what support for businesses/employees is available or in progress. It is clear that different boroughs are approaching support specific to the needs of their employers. A half day workshop for the Team and additional colleagues (to be identified) will take place at the end of October, facilitated by Merseyside Police. This will help agree tactical interventions.

There is a small amount of funding from Government to support this work, but clearly the priority is for Liverpool City Region employers/employees to receive the type of support relevant to them. From an employment and skills perspective, the Team will be pulling together the 'offer' available across the City Region and ensuring that this is communicated to employers/employees.

4.7 **Growth Platform - A new company to deliver growth for Liverpool City Region**

A new growth company for Liverpool City Region has been established to help create jobs, build business, attract investment and help our young people. Growth Platform will co-ordinate, manage and promote a wide range of business support, growth, investment, skills initiatives and sector development services across the City Region to make life easier for businesses seeking to start, invest and grow here. The formation of Growth Platform has been spearheaded by the LEP and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

The company will work in partnership with local authorities, businesses, universities and colleges and the third sector.

4.8 **Local Industrial Strategy**

Liverpool City Region's Local Industrial Strategy will set out a long-term economic vision for Liverpool City Region, providing a framework for its investment decisions, and for its conversations with government about how we work together, through devolution, to maximise prosperity for all people and communities.

Founded on a collaborative approach with partners, the Local Industrial

Strategy will articulate how the CA will build on its distinctive economic strengths, tackle its challenges, and develop transformational policies to unlock growth and be a catalyst to the development of an inclusive economy.

Aligned with the drivers of productivity and national Industrial Strategy's Grand Challenges, the Local Industrial Strategy will be focused across four key priorities:

- Good work, health and wellbeing for all;
- Vibrant and connected communities;
- More businesses innovating and growing;
- Clean growth.

The strategy will be underpinned by evidence, and a consultation workshop took place on the 11th October focusing on employment and skills issues. In attendance were reps from colleges, DWP, the CA, local authorities and universities. The final document will be published in March 2020.

An update report was presented to the Combined Authority (CA) on 1st November 2019. See link below.

<https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=364>

4.9 **Alstom - Social Mobility Foundation for Liverpool**

Alstom has been working with the Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) to set up a Liverpool Office over the past three years. There has been heavy investment (several £100ks) in Liverpool by Alstom and SMF to create a mechanism whereby young talent from disadvantaged backgrounds are mentored and supported in developing a career path through higher education and into the professions. This charity supports young people who are high achieving and from low-income backgrounds to enter top universities and professions. The 5-year Aspiring Professionals Programme (APP) provides students with mentoring, work placements, university application support and a wide range of career/skills workshops, which deliver the tools the young people need to succeed. Applications for the programme are now open, including a new series to support white working class boys in Liverpool, please see the attachments for more information.

5.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The varied range of issues covered in this report potentially present a number of challenges and opportunities across a number of the Council's current priorities. Where appropriate a more detailed analysis of the information and relevance to the council will take place.

6.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None identified.

7.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

7.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None identified.

7.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None identified.

7.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None identified.

7.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

7.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

8.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

8.1 There are no immediate risks directly relating to the information in the report.

9.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

9.1 There are no equality and diversity issues.

10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.